

The University of North Carolina
at Greensboro

JACKSON LIBRARY



CQ

no. 1173

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

WESTBROOK, NANCY. The Paranoid Bride and the Tiger-
Striped Priest. (1974) Directed by: Fred Chappell.
pp.65.

A study of ironic humor in poetry accomplished
through a collection of poems which have as their unifying
factor the experiences of the two main characters. The
intention is to generate recognition of the comic disparity
between internal values and external experience. The
ironic tone is established within the controlled frame-
work of poetic structure by the use of figurative
language: especially tropes and personification.

82
81113

THE PARANOID BRIDE AND THE
TIGER-STRIPED PRIEST

This thesis has been approved by the following
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The
University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

by

Nancy Westbrook
''

Thesis Advisor: Frederick Chappell
A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1974

April 9, 1974
Date of Acceptance by the
Approved by

Frederick Chappell
Thesis Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following
committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The
University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Adviser

Fred Chappell

Committee Members

W. J. Kirby - Smith

Murray S. Arndt

April 16, 1974
Date of Acceptance by Committee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Poems in this collection have appeared in The Greensboro Review, The Southern Poetry Review, Worksheet and The Archive.

Tiger-Striped Priest	11
Black/Black Unicorn	12
II.	
Sixteen by Subtraction	21
The Fat Baryte	23
The Virtuous Vampire	24
Ace's Nightmare	24
The Bride's Nightmare	25
Slaughter of Onions	26
III.	
ace in the Ghetto	41
The Bride's Blessing	42
Ace's Hangover	50
Fragrant Winesap	51
The French-Fried Sandwich	56
Salt-Hearted Chalk	61

457481

CONTENTS

	Page
I.	
The Birth	2
The Bride Addressing Her Groom	4
The Paranoid Bride	6
Tiger-Striped Priest	11
Bitches Black/ Black Unicorn	16
II.	
Bitten by Subtraction	21
The Fat Barghest	25
The Virtuous Vampire	29
Ace's Nightmare	34
The Bride's Nightmare	35
Slaughter of Onions	36
III.	
Ace in the Ghetto	41
The Bride's Blessing	49
Ace's Hangover	50
Pregnant Werewolf	51
The French-Fried Banshee	56
Half-Hearted Ghoul	61

457481

PROLOGUE

Because of the experimental and surrealistic nature of these poems, it is crucial to the reader's understanding that the two main characters be explicitly identified.

They are:

The Tiger-Striped Priest, commonly referred to as Ace. Ace is a muscular, earthy twenty-five pound tomcat. A cat-of-the-world, he has orange and white stripes and thick protruding jowls. His white whiskers spring upon the matter at hand with all the delicacy of a Sherman tank.

The Paranoid Bride, sometimes presented as the narrator of the poems. The bride is a sliver of night rain. She is a magnetic recluse who pretends not to notice that people stare at her eyes. Her eyes are deep-sea dark and glimmer with the illumination of strange sea creatures that never rise to the surface.

Both the Paranoid Bride and the Tiger-Striped Priest are a reflection of two different but interlocking forms of knowledge. The bride is representative of lunar knowledge, the knowledge of the subconscious mind. Ace is representative of solar knowledge, the knowledge of the conscious mind.

THE NIGHT

this is the time of night
when all others are sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

and I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I.

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

"You will begin by
making a circle with
the goatskin."
--Great Grimoire

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

I am not sleeping

THE BIRTH

this is the time of night
when all others are sleeping
except fog and i.
she is pregnant
and i am long overdue.
footsteps
sound in another apartment,
another hall
they cross
and criss-cross my mind.
and time approaches the
martyr hour.
if it is passed, i will live
another.
within all my reasoned memory
dwells down in some angry corner
unborn space
where names have never been

all is confined to the gentle

bleakness of nothing.

only the dripping faucet presides

over the black and white wetness

of time passing

as the unanswered stillness of

time future

presses its swollen belly

against the bathtub

and peers in.

THE BRIDE ADDRESSING HER GROOM

your reflection unfurls across the floor
star-spangled mayhem.

of course,

i've confided in the walls,
the doors,

they've crossed their hinges.

over and over i'm forced
to hide them

the windows
so you won't stun them
so you won't hurl out their light
so you won't steal

their light

funny the way

your sadism
becomes you

it glides besides your shadow.

it runs when you call.

i'm shut out

from your darkness;

and the small whipped balls

of yesterday

uncurl

at my feet.

through the plumes

of pointed

pales.

none disguised

as bold gypsy violins

freely spied.

valleys

wilted

suspiciously

roses

grow

antennae.

THE PARANOID BRIDE

it got worse.

a lot worse.

rumors pried

through the plumes

of potted

palms.

noses disguised

as bold gypsy violins

freely spied.

waiters

wilted

surreptitiously

roses

grew

antennas.

even the
night
closed in;

embalmed like the spa
in an old
movie set.

ace and i
were calmly
lingering over tea.

when a tipsy
well-dressed
well-rehearsed

nightmare
tapped on the french windows
to get in.

"it's messy outside."
"it's messier in,"
ace replied.

"depressing,
i was bored,"
the nightmare confided.

here
it was
abruptly interrupted

by an
aggressive rose with
a microphone

tucked in its teeth.
"Confess!"
the rose cried.

"To what?"
the nightmare
roared.

"To going around
in the wrong circles,"
the rose replied.

"Ignore it,"

ace

butted in. *late.*

CONFESS

CONFESS. . .

"Do Something,"

the nightmare

implored *ing*

us.

A nose violin

pressed closer

i stabbed it *ing.*

with a fork.

"Subversive." it swore

as it tore away.

"shit." ace

assessed

the situation.

"You can't
mend a
half-witted tale."

he
pulled
my hand.

"Out!
we're getting
out.

Before we get
nailed in
a terrible ending."

TIGER-STRIPED PRIEST

old

dead

god,

you

gotta

listen.

listen, ace,

i can hear

him purring.

AH YES

YOU

HAVE COME.

my

face

flopped.

ace's fur

bristled

a grim red.

his wrath

Through

a knot

of glistening

"no offense,"

henna

mist;

the god

"rotten year,

spread

his sere

hands

of

for

an

offering.

"Oh, come now,"

Deftly ace

dropped

something in.

BURNT BREADCRUSTS?

BURNT BREADCRUSTS!

His wrath
blistered
like snotty popcorn.

"no offense,"
ace
demurred.

"rotten year,
charred crop,
a rash

of
itchy trolls
blasted us."

"Oh, come now,"
the god
jeered.

"No
nonsense
now."

His mistrust
sizzled
like a hot rattlesnake.

"ah, seriously
haven't you
read the headlines?"

"HA!
A Phrenologists'
plot."

He fussed like
a swatted fly.
"Crackpots."

"stop," ace
mustered
a third try.

But the mist / BLACK-UNICORN

curdled

into

the patina
of old car

windows.

"Savages," the

words flowed

from afar.

"I knew

I should

have

left

disasters

ago."

BITCHES BLACK/ BLACK UNICORN

the witch

the mother-god

has brewed her potion

black against the fever.

Black turned stone

then blacker again.

By rows

the possessors come

trance-like step

into their bodies

zipper their dun-colored skins

and begin.

a thrust

a heave

and then a creature, there.

with hearse dark eyes
and rabbi's hair.
only a small few

won't lose that blackness.
i am one.
i am one.

in this corner,
wearing white trunks
a black russian madonna

trapped in a boxing ring,
waiting for the champ
to gun home.

a feather-weight madonna
wrapped in a damp
crotch-dark church

where the walls scream blood.
the ease
the ease

with which you do it, friend.

suck in air

then out again.

in a stretched hide

men find intriguing,

unicorn beautiful.

a seamy side

unicorns don't understand.

time walks backwards

on its hands

if it should go.

if i cannot buy.

one pure

lotion-smooth pack

of undiluted

forgiveness,

for my

blank soul.

don't sell it
to another, God.
it's a little

too tight.
it pinches hope
like an anaconda.

it's a little
too frayed
to be worn again.

He reveals strength
only in his loss.
--I Ching

SITTING BY SUBTRACTION

hang on

hang on tight

to your disaster.

slatch it

in a delicate

orang-outang

embrace.

till its yellow eyes blink

till its yellow eyes wince.

what would you be

without it?

how could you

replace it?

now, when supermarkets sell

only imitation

II.

"He reveals strength
only in his toes."

--I Ching

BITTEN BY SUBTRACTION

hang on

hang on tight

to your disaster.

clutch it

in a delicate

orang-outang

embrace.

till its yellow eyes blink

till its yellow eyes wince.

what would you be

without it?

how could you

replace it?

now, when supermarkets sell

only imitation

disaster
would the imitation do?
would it fit right?

fit like
the old sleek white
double-breasted disaster.

the old stuff
that neatly bites
reality's split ends.

all the ends retreat.
they're
uneasy.

i am uneasy.
i am uneasy.
lord.

in your day.
i will not speak
of your night.

the cozy way
your hours hang
sweating

like sleazy vampires
after raw meat.
they're after my meat.

no.
no meat.
no meat?

ace, my cat,
his beefy jowls sagged
in pudgy dismay

scowls at the grocer.
deadpan
the grocer says

he's got a plan
to fatten lean cats,
to flatten all kinds of disaster,

to stuff it
in tin cans
like sardines,

"When the guinea gets
tough;
the tough get going."
-John Mitchell

to eat
with
ragged ends.

he's bluffing.

only
bluffing.

only i
can suck disaster
so clean.

"so clean,"
ace growled,
"seems

plenty
is
left-over."

* A guinea whose
appearance suggests
misfortune

THE FAT BARGHEST*

"when the going gets
tough;
the tough get going."
-John Mitchell

here

they come.

bastards.

those bastards

with their great grins

squeezed in

the shape of guns.

grease the trigger.

trigger off

a rousing sneer

for those sniggering heroes,

those priggish pros,

* a goblin whose
appearance presages
misfortune

the oily masters of disaster.

whoa, it's not.

Hey!

easy, little big eyes, easy.

hang onto your rope.

it's sprung a noose

supposin' you're in.

it should stroll.

unsuspectingly slide,

down the wrong neck.

heck, they're running slow.

i'm no polecat.

i ride

in young reason's gang.

any dopey stray

knows

reason's the

best ace

a cat's got.

hang on, ace,
old cat.
reason's not

where these
grinning bastards
are at.

they've sprung loose.
looser than
loco weed.

we hear
they're running from,
they're gunning from,

somewhere
farther right.
right from the grin of greed.

and they aim to win:
all your rights,
all your wrongs.

they got strong needs.

cat,

i claim

they'll lead

us

to a frame-up.

leave us

dancing from a rope

spinning caty-cornered

in oblivion.

THE VIRTUOUS VAMPIRE

oh no.

it's stuck again.

slumped like a rusty drunk

on our door step.

never fails.

ace

staked out,

his cat-tail tucked behind

a window-shade,

rumbles out:

we must make our

favorite dump

a donation.

make our friendly

local junk-yard

a trade.

he mumbles,

plunk out

the unwelcome mat.

he fusses,

it's glum.

it's got to see.

it's got to go.

but

Misery

has no eyes.

Only hands,

it thrusts out

from its land

of undoing.

they wear

light tweed slacks,

white socks,
black-&-blue deeds.
About midnight

they're back
at the office,
our doorstep.

they flick on
a rumpus;
knock beer cans

on the floor;
shock the neighbors;
incite

ace
till he swears
his fur clicking a

bright neon
rust
in disgust.

he blames you.
he claims the unsightly
mess

comes
from men
who plague me with roses.

when i'm
impressed
by a bull's leg.

he knows
smart beauties
get upset

by dead shin bones.
even those
minus their meat.

no
no
this fairy tale can't

begin to find

or grow

the neat,

the right ending.

i would depart.

i would depart.

if i could find

the right door

wary

the doors

have blackened

their footsteps

with a lotion

much blacker

than night.

and i

am left frozen

into a luxury.

ACE'S NIGHTMARE

sometimes

i feel in the mirror's

like an ancient

portrait i see

 of myself,

 american indian face

hanging in the mirror

nailed back at me

to an abyss.

 with the fire-water

dimly staring in the mirror

into of mistrust,

space. despair.

THE BRIDE'S NIGHTMARE

sometimes

in the mirror's
grimace,

i see

a gaunt

american indian face
glaring

back at me

rusted

with the fire-water

of mistrust,

despair.

SLAUGHTER OF ONIONS

we have unlocked
loose walls,
slim walls
that slump
into bowlegged space
a sure sign of the season

of inner grim.
a sure season
where every runyon

emergency
slams its door
in your face.

ever knocked
door-to-door
trying to reason

with an emergency?

They won't listen.

They never listen.

Listen, ace

i tell my cat.

but he's more ornery

than any runyon emergency.

he yells,

Hail, to the winner

of the Onion King Contest

spits stale snake seeds

all over the floor.

Every time you call.

All the time you call.

i can't sling him

into this night,

can i?

this sly shapeless night?

this uneasy fey night?
where dirty dreams rape
sleazy stars?

where high moons roam free?
where wild blue yonders
prowl in dim hallways?

what if he meets a
stray emergency?
what if it follows him home?

i have nothing
to feed it.
nothing to spare.

nothing to spare.
for you have eaten
my days down

ground my days down
to one tense
bare sigh.

and it beats
obscenely against
the sound of absence.

III.

"Prickly plants thrust
aside evil."
--Atharva Veda

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

III.

THEY IN THE CHISTO

"Prickly plants thrust
aside evil."

--Atharva Veda

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

THEY IN THE CHISTO

ACE IN THE GHETTO

despair has
too many
holes.

fake holes
will come
if called.

wary holes

real holes. . .

if they hear

a sound;

contort

distort

into a

shred of mist,

disappear.

more bold, more austere
lines form.
shapes deepen.

swarm round
the fell
door.

roll down upon the bedrock,
roll down upon the mind-host,
roll down Machu Picchu.

hissed
awake
by their storms,

the statue of Christ
the Brazilian Christ

raises his index finger
flexes his index finger

the air clears.
the lines flee.
the shapes quelled

by the rhythm
by his rhythm

there are rhythms.
there are rhythms
to suffering.

lines form.
shapes deepen.

they say.
they say
there are rhythms, Mary.

But
some other
serpent skirted

goddess;
some other
Mexican bar queen;

some other
hussy-studded
event

reaps
the terror
of life.

not me.
not me.

i come
with
holes.

i run
with
rhythms.

i am
a keeper
of squat holes.

holes
shared
by a

fresco
of
famous forgotten.

they stare.
lines form.
shapes deepen.

they stare
like
old rakes

in a convent.
but
from the nun's eye,

where no

curtain

blows;

where a low

wind

blows

about the

naked thigh

of a plastered saint

where the naked glare

of pain

pain

MARY,

do you

hear?

pained against

a flame

parched eyelid;

pained against
a steel
state;

a hole
that drips
blood.

a hole
stained
in blood.

a hole
rotted into
strips of suffering.

lines form.
shapes deepen.
On the march

the three kings
detoured
to Mecca.

they
smelled
a rat.

they
couldn't be
told.

you cannot
tell
me,

that Christ
risen
is

better off
than
Christ dead.

Only lines form.
Only shapes deepen.

THE BRIDE'S BLESSING

a piece this morning with a sense of loss

shattered mirror

reflects

lazy grass,

honey sunlight.

she is pretty.

your new one.

i

hope she

brings

you

grief.

ACE'S HANGOVER

i arose this morning with a sense of doom
in my head.

as if the undone day
which began at 6
was already
too late.

PREGNANT WEREWOLF

jesus

it's

walls again.

my hopes have walls

my hopes have walls

where

their sky

should

be.

deliver me from walls

or worse;

deliver me from doors:

renegade doors

with hot

handles

sneering doors
with
sexy hinges.

"ECK!"
"invaded again,"
ace cringes,

"not those doors."
gingerly
he crawls

behind
his armor plated
sofa.

"a door's framed
me before,"
he bawls.

"a pea-green pine
door with
mad screws

knocked me
up against
a scowling wall."

"forget?"
"forgive?"
"not me."

"not even if
a sad-faced
door

with turpentine tears
apologized
vowing

it'd been
henpecked
by a pushy wall."

"Doors are
a menace.
lock'em up, i say."

You say
You're wise
You know

the strength
of walls,
of doors,

but doors
like overbearing
parents

shove us into corners
shove us into lives
we can't live.

He glares,
"show me
a werewolf

that's a
kind mother
or

any mother ~~TRIED BANGS~~

that's

kind.

~~damn.~~

~~you've done it~~

no, kindness

ends

at the

~~Vietnam~~

~~Private Tail,~~

womb's

door

from then

~~crashed~~

~~into a~~

on

~~crashcoat~~

it's

monsters blaring."

~~and~~

~~sprinting~~

~~dark glasses.~~

~~shouts:~~

~~Jesus,~~

~~your 12's in a jam.~~

~~Jesus,~~

~~your 12's in a jam.~~

THE FRENCH-FRIED BANSHEE

Damn,
you've done it
now.

Veteran
Private Tail,
ace

crammed
into a
trenchcoat

and
sprouting
dark glasses.

shouts:

jesus,
your id's in a jam.

it was nailed.

it was busted.

he frets, at all

"poor kid,

bitten by a

nicotine fit of lust.

shoulda known

you have

can't seem

lean

on the

underworld.

Damn and

those

flat feet. "flat?"

they'll

make you

sweat."

he scowls,
"no doubt
no doubt at all

from up
against
the wall

it's
a grave
situation.

Now,
you gotta
get

bail and
a mangsman."
. . . "A what?"

"God! the
moth-eaten minds
you hand me.

lawyer, ~~even checks,~~
nitwit,
lawyer."

"oh. . ."
"Don't you
understand?"

All the rules
have
left us.

if you ^{do}
don't get
the money;

you
don't get
the justice.

Don't wail
about
'what's fair,'

little brown cheeks,
your id
knew.

Anger is
the weak
spot.

The only
spot
left to us.

HALF-HEARTED GHOUL

"Hush,"

ace

warned.

the night

cracked

its jaws.

Only the

moon

yawned.

Among the trees,

the leaves

tattled

in a

foreign

tongue.

Then like a
fat drunken
typhoon

he attacked.
"Hey"
recollection. . .

"it's Saint Madness."
"i'm back,"
he gushed.

ace shriveled
like a
spooked prune.

they
didn't
agree.

"what for?
you quidnunc,"
i chatted gladly.

"see, kid, it's
like a
bad heart.

no matter
how bad
you can't

live
without it,"
he spoofed.

yet
amid
the plush fountains,

the pudgy parks,
and the pretenses;
he

wasn't
popular
in the neighborhood.

hence,
the Louisville Police
had released

him
6 times;
scorned

in their
spunky bid
to smack him

with
ruining
the peace.

"actually,"
he crooned
intensely

"i'm
tracking
the yak

of commonsense."

"what bunk,"

ace spat.

Saint Madness

blushed;

"this is

not to be borne,"

he blubbered.

ace flushed,

"not born;

deceased.

it

was

rubbed out

in a cardiac arrest."